

KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO THE DISTRICT'S CHILDREN

Proposed FY 2006 Operating Budget
District of Columbia Public Schools
January 12, 2005

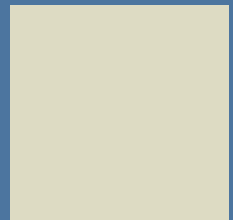
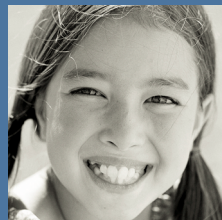
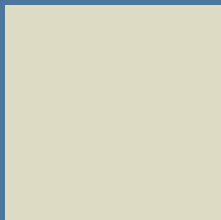
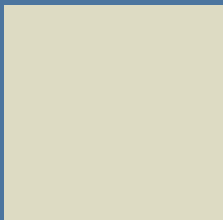
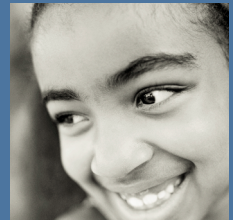
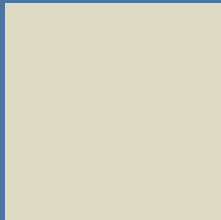
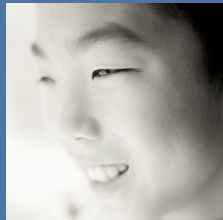
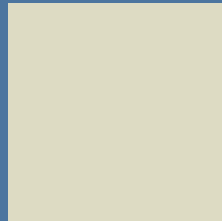
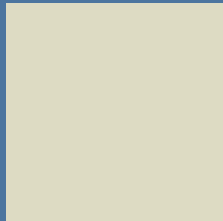
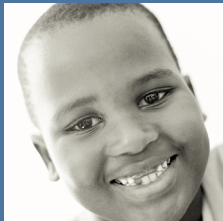


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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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The Honorable Mayor Anthony A. Williams
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Williams:

I am pleased to transmit to you the proposed DCPS FY 2006 Operating Budget on behalf of the District of Columbia Public Schools. We have welcomed Dr. Clifford B. Janey as the new Superintendent of Schools and are confident that his leadership will bring about long-needed systemic changes to our school system. This budget reflects our collaborative consideration of the school system's essential needs.

The proposed budget is part of the initial phase of a move toward a performance-based budget system where budgetary items are tied to specific performance benchmarks. We are anticipating for FY 2006 a local mark of \$775.5 million. This represents an increase of 1.97 percent to the approved FY 2005 local funds operating budget.

The general thrust of this budget reflects the outcomes of the Board of Education retreat held earlier this year:

- Take from the best state standards those that will ensure that all DC students meet the highest expectations for knowledge and skills at each grade level. Children in the District must be competitive regionally and nationally.
- Establish a comprehensive district-wide instructional system including a new system wide reading and mathematics program, a coherent curriculum for all grades, unified and focused professional development programs based on the new curriculum, regular assessments of student progress, close monitoring of implementation, and strong accountability for results – including performance contracts for staff.
- Contract at the earliest possible date with a proven national firm to build a world-class business system for DCPS to support teaching and learning and improve effectiveness and efficiency in all operations.
- Adopt a discipline management plan and create a partnership with city and community leaders to ensure the safety and security of all DCPS students.

The budget reaffirms our continuing commitment to improving student academic performance while exercising fiscal prudence and living within the parameters of the District's fiscal reality. The increases within this budget are intended to fulfill the clear need for change in this school system and are likewise designed to advance student achievement, address curriculum reform, make substantial headway into the area of facilities maintenance and repair, and target long-standing needs in the area of technology and innovation. We intend to advance these initiatives across a continuum from Pre-K through post-graduation in order to ensure that our students not only advance their present achievement but are prepared for higher learning and the world of work.

This proposed budget is designed to begin the process of implementing Superintendent Janey's "levers" for improved student achievement. While we realize that there is much work to be done, we are confident that the key elements of the plan for improvement are well worth the required investment.

We understand that accountability demands a return on the investment of our citizens' resources in the form of real, measurable and sustainable improvement in student academic performance. This budget meets that test by allocating funds to meet specific educational objectives. This budget represents the first phase of our performance-based budgeting effort. As such, its main thrust is accountability and transparency.

We believe the Proposed FY 2006 Operating Budget represents our continuing efforts to meet the academic needs of our students and provide them with an environment that is conducive to learning and success. We look forward to working with you, the Council and our other partners and stakeholders to improve student academic performance for the good of the District of Columbia.

Sincerely,

Peggy Cooper Cafritz
President



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
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January 7, 2005

Ms. Peggy Cooper Cafritz, President
The District of Columbia Board of Education
825 North Capitol Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-1994

Dear Ms. Cafritz:

The crafting of an operating budget for the District of Columbia Public Schools is critical to advancing our primary mission: the successful education of every student. Our school system stands at a crossroads in its history and this budget and its allocation of resources symbolize the kind of commitment to effective learning that we are willing to make. This is the first performance-based budget that I submit for consideration as the Superintendent of Schools. I assure you that it represents what I believe to be the absolute requisites for improving student achievement and systemically changing the dominant culture of our school system.

I am aware of the concerns of teachers, staff members, parents and other residents of the District regarding public education. These concerns include raising academic standards, addressing the historically low test scores system wide, establishing more effective communication between parents and school system officials, increasing opportunities for professional development for teachers, addressing the physical condition of our school buildings, implementing accountability for how resources are spent, and making our schools more responsive to the concerns of a variety of stakeholders. These and other concerns have been repeated in recent years, often with a sense of frustration. This is a new day for DCPS and this budget represents our best effort to move beyond complacency and the status quo to achieve new and compelling results. I believe that we can build a world-class school system here in the nation's capital.

The goals set by the Board of Education early in 2004 call for the adoption of new and rigorous academic standards and accompanying curriculum as well strong accountability measures system wide. My own "levers" for school improvement outline the parameters for sustainable change across the board – including improvements in professional development, adult literacy, school facilities, community engagement, and the development of healthy children in healthy families. These are attainable measures and offer a perspective into the kind of systemic, institutional shift that has already begun to take place. They also will provide support for the teaching and learning that takes place in our schools.

In order to strengthen these efforts, we have identified specific educational initiatives, in addition to our same services request, which will begin addressing some of the above concerns. Firstly, we intend to implement exacting and clear academic standards District-wide and shape a new core curriculum for each content area related to the achievement of those standards. Our school system must be clear about what our students should learn, how they should learn it, and who must be held accountable for that effort. This initiative will include the adoption of performance-based assessments as well as professional development programs that are directly aligned to the new curriculum and instructional strategies. In addition, we will implement selective supplemental services and prevention/intervention programs that are designed to meet the needs of both high performing students and those struggling to meet the standards or who are at risk.

Secondly, we need to address the condition of our aging facilities, the backlog of work that needs to be done in them, and other concerns related to the learning environment. Children cannot learn successfully in an environment that is not conducive to that learning. The effects of our aging structures, deferred maintenance projects, and delayed improvements have caused a critical situation which we intend to address swiftly and comprehensively. There has clearly been a growing public concern regarding our school facilities and we can no longer approach the problem in a piece-meal fashion.

Lastly, we will address the important area of instructional technology. Our current system suffers from a lack of modernization and reliability. In order to address these issues and the need for curriculum and instructional management and assessment online, we intend to invest in both personnel and non-personnel aspects of information technology. By doing so we hope to achieve greater accountability, better customer service, increased system reliability, and overall transparency throughout the school system. Inadequate information systems and equipment often thwart the best intentions of educators and those who support their work.

In light of current budgetary constraints in the District of Columbia and with a determination to remain fiscally responsible, I believe this operating budget will considerably advance our work at improving student achievement, assist us in changing the institutional culture of the school system, and make the necessary program and operational changes that ultimately will benefit the children in our classrooms. I look forward to working with you and the other Board members to that end.

Sincerely,

Clifford B. Janey, Ed.D.
Superintendent

AN HISTORIC CHALLENGE

The first public schools in the District of Columbia opened in 1805 in two wooden school houses where fewer than fifty students were served with an initial operating budget of \$1,500. President Thomas Jefferson, the first president of the school system's Board of Trustees, could never have imagined the journey this school system would make over the next two centuries. Nor would he have anticipated the growth in student enrollment and the accompanying budgetary requirements that face the public schools of the nation's capital today.

The history of this school system reveals a continuing upward struggle to achieve educational excellence in the face of ever-present problems, frequently opposing philosophies, and uncertain funding resources. Central to the telling of the story of public education in Washington, DC, as in most urban school centers in the United States, are the fight to achieve equality for all students regardless of race or ethnic group, the effort to secure the necessary services for students with special needs, and the problems resulting from an infrastructure in which the average age of a school is 63 years.

Yet throughout the push and pull of history and despite the obstacles faced by a school system yearning to reach institutional maturity, one compelling idea remained -- the students in our schools must achieve academic and personal success. That notion has given birth to a number of educational reform efforts over the years. Each was well-intentioned, each being born in a continually shifting and unstable context of leadership. An honest assessment of the situation reveals the fact that while this school district had a vigorous wish to bring about accelerated student achievement, it lacked a clear and distinct idea of how to do so. Furthermore, ever-tightening fiscal constraints made overall improvement, of both student achievement and operational programs and processes a daunting prospect.

While gains in student achievement were made, they were more often than not statistically inconsequential and certainly lethargic in their pace. Academic success for every student continued to be an illusive goal as the school system sought to adopt a wide and often confusing variety of programs and strategies, each with its own esoteric vocabulary, each promising results that were at best uncertain. Again, the destination was clear but the fog created by a multiplication of strategies, lack of a coherent direction, and a burgeoning malaise resulting from sinking morale, made getting there virtually impossible.

In December 2003 a seminal report on DCPS was issued by the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS). This document systematically traced the roots of the chronic and growing crisis in the school system primarily to a systemic failure of leadership, particularly in the area of curriculum and instruction. The report concluded that DCPS had "*abdicated its leadership responsibility for student achievement*" to individual schools and principals.

The CGCS issued what was a sobering indictment: "*The district has lost its instructional focus; its efforts have become fractured and incoherent...The result is what one sees today: no plan for improving student performance, low expectations of children, no accountability for results, haphazard instruction, incoherent programming, and dismal outcomes.*"

What appears at first to be only a bleak assessment, the CGCS report provides new and specific marching orders for DCPS. It is time to move beyond the status quo. It is time to jettison anything that impedes genuine, measurable student achievement. It is time to establish control of our curriculum development, the education of staff members, and the process of instruction. The time has come for a new kind of leadership in DCPS. This operating budget is designed to begin to address the crisis mentality in our school system by proposing new initiatives in academics, technology, facilities and infrastructure investment.

KNOWING THE CONCERNS

First and foremost this school system must rebuild the confidence of students, parents, and the wider community. In order to do that it must be evident that the school system knows and understands the concerns, issues, and sentiments of its various stakeholders. Engaging those stakeholders in clear and convincing change means bringing their concerns and ideas to the table. Without that kind of broad involvement, any attempts at effective change will be lacking.

During the past two years, a number of key forums were held by the city and by the school system. Among these were the Mayor's Citizen Summits and the DCPS Budget Roundtable Discussions. These events provided parents, guardians, and members of the wider community with an opportunity to forthrightly express their concerns regarding the public schools and what they perceived to be areas of greatest need.

It is useful, at this point, to summarize a number of principal findings of these forums as a point of departure for the performance budget that follows. This budget must address, in as reasonable a way as possible, the real issues and concerns of those who have ultimate authority over the school system – those who provide for its resources.

At the Citizen Summit III, held in December 2003, to specifically address education in the District of Columbia, four general areas emerged as points of concern:

- Trust – residents no longer trust the city's school system. The anxiety created by instability of leadership, seriously lagging test scores, promises ignored or unkept, and a steadily-increasing deterioration of school facilities has resulted in public skepticism and mistrust.
- Accountability – The perception exists that few people in DCPS are accountable. Furthermore, there is often confusion regarding to whom problems or concerns should be addressed. A good deal of "passing the buck" occurs when concerns are raised, and little or no results or solutions.
- Partnership – Citizens expressed a particular need for better communication and partnering between the school system and the community. It often appears that the school system and the wider community are working at cross purposes in the education of children.

- Shared ownership – Participants believed that the current crisis in public education in the nation's capital involves failures in all sectors: city government, school system administration, teachers, parents, and members of the community. They felt that the problems will be solved only through a multi-sector approach.

There was a widespread feeling that the school system and local schools operate in an isolated and detached manner. A greater responsiveness to parent and public concerns would go a long way to improving the environment of learning, increasing the probability for great student achievement.

The FY 2004 Budget Roundtable Discussions, held in September 2004, echoed the above mentioned concerns and issues. However, more specific areas of need surfaced, most of which reflected the frustration of the parent and community member regarding the operation of the local school. Among the items mentioned for the preparation of the FY 2006 budget were:

- Increased staff development programs and training in technology;
- More school custodians, increased funding for maintenance, particularly deferred projects;
- Increased funding for preventive maintenance, particularly regarding environmental impact problems;
- A counselor for every school and the establishment of an adaptive curriculum;
- Actual bilingual staff in the ESL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) program;
- A more comprehensive Arts program and greater participation of the local school in the adoption of textbooks;
- Increase the accountability of principals and monitor school and central office spending;
- Establish a clear mathematics and language arts curriculum with standards;
- Increase special education services at the local level;
- Establish a smoother more user-friendly procurement and payroll system;
- Make the budget process simple and more transparent;
- Increase funding for gifted and talented programs;
- Adequately funded special education in local schools in comparison to private placement;
- Maximize other funding sources outside DCPS

These items reflect a fraction of the concerns and issues raised by the participants. As in the Citizen Summit, the overriding concern was one of trust – the school system must restore its tattered credibility, adopt system wide standards of learning, and, in effect, change its institutional culture. After many years of uncertainty, changing leadership, and declining morale, DCPS finds itself at a crossroads. Difficult choices must be made if our children are to advance their achievement. The status quo must yield to new and radical changes if the school system is to arrest the current malaise. The proposed operating budget for FY 2006 begins that important process.

FACING THE FUTURE

Given the historic struggle of the school system to advance student achievement and in light of the present concerns of its various stakeholders, a clear and compelling program for change needs to be implemented. Building a world class school system requires that such a program express certain key "levers," or stated goals upon which the systemic change may be based and sustained. The Superintendent has crafted 12 such "levers" for the improvement of DCPS. They are:

1. The school system has the responsibility to develop and increase the instructional capacity of principals and vice principals. It also is responsible for the recruitment, retention, and development of excellent teachers.
2. The local school has the responsibility of aligning itself with system wide standards to attract, retain, and develop excellent teachers and support staff at the school level.
3. DCPS will strengthen the organizational capacity to diagnose teaching and learning problems at the classroom, school, and district levels. This involves employing diagnostic instruments to identify student needs for particular kinds of instruction and/or developmental programs. Systematic data will also be used to address particular needs for instructional and professional staff.
4. A seamless system of accountability will be implemented, both for the school as a whole and staff members in particular, with a view to advancing student achievement and creating a high-performing organization.
5. It is essential that an alignment be formed between the system wide learning standards, the standards-based curriculum, professional development offerings, the acquisition of instructional materials (print and non-print), and instructional practices.
6. The community's capacity to help advance and sustain student achievement will be further developed and effective parent engagement in learning will be strengthened and encouraged.
7. The level of adult literacy will be increased.
8. Students will be adequately prepared for higher education (college) and/or the workplace.
9. The development of healthy children in healthy families is an over-riding priority of the school system.
10. One important aspect of improving the quality of learning is the improvement of school buildings and facilities.
11. A management system will be developed that will ensure that the overall school system works efficiently.

12. The school system will engage its various stakeholders in the process of finding ways to involve the citywide community in collaborative efforts to support and sustain student achievement. Each segment of the community shares this important responsibility, including the school system's administration.

These elements constitute the engine of school system improvement and provide a clear and unifying focus for future strategies to accelerate student achievement and change the institutional culture of DCPS.